

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 SY-05 A-01 OPR-02 AID-05
MCT-01 PC-01 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-08 INR-10 LAB-04
NSAE-00 SIL-01 OMB-01 HA-05 CCO-00 L-03 H-01
NSCE-00 SSO-00 OC-06 PA-01 PM-05 CA-01 SCS-06
SP-02 SS-15 USSS-00 INRE-00 DODE-00 ICAE-00 PPT-01
SIG-03 /111 W

-----012735 301347Z /46

O 301423Z MAY 78

FM AMEMBASSY ANTANANARIVO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 572

INFO AMEMBASSY PORT LOUIS IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY MAPUTO IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAM IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY VICTORIA IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY NAIROBI IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY PARIS IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY LONDON IMMEDIATE

USCINCEUR IMMEDIATE

CINCPACFLT IMMEDIATE

CINCUSNAVEUR IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L ANTANANARIVO 0973

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, MA

SUBJ: STUDENT DEMONSTRATIONS, LOOTING AND ARSON IN ANTANANARIVO

SUMMARY: WIDESPREAD VANDALISM AND LOOTING, AND SOME SERIOUS
CASES OF ARSON HAVE OCCURED OVER LAST TWO DAYS IN CENTRAL
ANTANANARIVO. PERPETRATORS WERE LARGELY THE CITY'S YOUNG
MALE UNEMPLOYED. THESE EVENTS BEGAN MAY 29 FOLLOWING A CONFRON-
TATION BETWEEN STRIKING STUDENTS AND SECURITY FORCES DURING WHICH
A STUDENT, A POLICEMAN, AND A FOREIGN WOMAN WERE KILLED. MOB
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OF UNEMPLOYED THEN BESIEGED AND SET FIRE TO THREE POLICE BUILDINGS
AND STARTED LOOTING, WITH INDIAN-OWNED BUSINESSES A PARTICULAR TARGET.

SECURITY FORCES MADE NO EFFECTIVE ATTEMPTS TO CONTROL SITUATION.
IT IS NOT EVIDENT AT THIS TIME WHETHER THERE WAS ANY DELIBERATE
INSTIGATION OF MOB OR WHETHER VANDALS SPONTANEOUSLY TOOK OCCASION
OF TENSION CREATED BY CONFRONTATION WITH STUDENTS TO VENT DISCONTENT

WITH AUTHORITIES AND RANSACK STORES OF UNIVERSALLY DISLIKED INDIAN MERCHANTS. END SUMMARY.

2. STUDENT DEMONSTRATION ON MORNING OF MAY 29 WHICH SET ALL OF THIS OFF WAS PART OF A WEEK OLD STUDENT PROTEST AGAINST SPECIAL LENIENCY BEING SHOWN TO STUDENTS ON COAST, AS AGAINST THOSE FROM CENTRAL HIGHLANDS, IN THE MATTER OF GRADING BACCALAUREATE EXAMINATIONS. EDUCATIONAL AUTHORITIES HAD ORDERED RE-EXAMINATION FOR CANDIDATES IN SOME COASTAL LOCATIONS WHEN VERY FEW PASSED ON FIRST TRY AND ANTANANARIVO STUDENTS HAVE CITED THIS AS RACIAL FAVORITISM IN FAVOR OF PREDOMINANTLY AFRICAN COASTAL PEOPLE-PRESIDENT RATSIRAKA IS FROM COAST-AS AGAINST MORE ASIATIC HIGHLANDERS.

3. STUDENTS HAD VOTED TO STRIKE OVER THIS ISSUE THURSDAY MAY 25 AFTER TEACHERS HAD ABANDONNED THEIR OWN STRIKE ON SAME ISSUE WHICH HAD BEGUN TWO WEEKS EARLIER. UNTIL YESTERDAY, MEETINGS AND DEMONSTRATIONS HAD BEEN PEACEFUL. SOME OF STUDENTS HAD REPORTEDLY ELECTED TO RETURN TO CLASS MAY 29 AND POLICE FORCES HAD BEEN ASSIGNED TO PROTECT THEM FROM STUDENTS WANTING TO CONTINUE STRIKE. CONFRONTATION BECAME VIOLENT WHEN ROCKS WERE THROWN AT POLICE AND A STUDENT WAS KILLED BY GUNSHOT IN TUSSELE WITH POLICEMEN. SOME OF THE POLICE CARS WERE THEN SET ON FIRE AND ONE POLICEMAN WAS KILLED IN MELEE. STUDENTS AND PARENTS THEN MARCHED TO PRESIDENT'S PALACE AND CITY HALL. AT PALACE THEY DRAPED BLACK CLOTH OVER GATE WITHOUT RESISTANCE FROM GUARDS. A FOREIGN CONFIDENTIAL

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WOMAN WAS KILLED BY STRAY SHOT.

4. BY NOON MAY 29 THINGS SEEMED TO HAVE QUIETED DOWN. BUT IN AFTERNOON UNEMPLOYED LOITERERS WENT INTO ACTION. SO FAR POLICE HEADQUARTERS FOR THE CITY AND TWO OF THE CITY DISTRICTS HAVE BEEN SET ON FIRE AS WELL AS A NUMBER OF SHOPS AND VEHICLES. MANY OTHERS LOOTED.

5. GOVERNMENT HAS ISSUED CALL TO ORDER AND WARNED THAT SEVERE MEASURES WOULD BE TAKEN, BUT SO FAR SECURITY FORCES HAVE ONLY MADE SPORADIC ARRESTS. CURFEW HAS BEEN INSTITUTED FROM 1900 TO 0700.

6. AS OF 1500 LOCAL TIME MAY 30 SOME STUDENTS WERE HOLDING A PEACEFUL DEMONSTRATION IN CENTER OF CITY AND A LIGHT RAIN HAD DISPERSED MOST OF LOOTING MOBS. WHILE WE ARE WATCHING SITUATION CAREFULLY I SEE NO NEED FOR A TRAVEL ALERT AT PRESENT. OUR NEXT OFFICIAL VISITORS ARE THE INSPECTORS DUE ON JUNE 3 AND THEY CAN CONTINUE THEIR PLANS TO COME HERE ON SCHEDULE.

7. COMMENT. WHETHER THERE IS ANY DELIBERATE LINK BETWEEN THE ACTIONS OF THE STUDENTS AND THOSE OF THE LOOTERS, AND WHATEVER THE

MOTIVES OF THE LATTER, THIS INCIDENT, EVEN IF IT ENDS RIGHT
NOW, CAN ONLY HARM THE REPUTATION OF THE RATSIRAKA REGIME
WHICH ONE YEAR AGO MADE PUBLIC SECURITY ONE OF ITS PRIORITY
OBJECTIVES.

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Message Attributes

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